New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1957

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NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK MIRROR
NEW YORK WORLD TELEGRAM & THE SUN
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK TIMES

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"Romanoff and Juliet"

New York Post

October 11, 1957

TWO on the AISLE

By RICHARD WATTS Jr.

Peter Ustinov and the Cold War

Although it deals more or less with the violent subject of American-Russian snarling, "Romanoff and Juliet" is a quiet, genial and warm-hearted satire. This good-humored contrast between topic and treatment, in conjunction with the author's delightful performance as a sort of master of ceremonies in the revels, is the chief charm of Peter Ustinov's gay little improvisation, which opened last night at the Plymouth Theater. It isn't a play that knocks you over the head with its effects, but it seems to me a witty and charming entertainment.

Since this is the season when the theater is going in for ingenious modern parallels with "Romeo and Juliet," it strikes me as only appropriate that Mr. Ustinov should look on the current relationship between Washington and Moscow in terms of the celebrated unpleasantness of the Montagues and the Capulets. He is not tragic about it, though, nor does he bother too much with the comparison. He is merely telling a pleasant little story about the romance between the daughter of an American ambassador and the son of his Russian opposite number.

But considerably more important than the tale of the mildly star-crossed lovers is the setting of their romantic activities. It is a mythical "smallest country in Europe," a friendly little land, with an army of two part-time soldiers who carry unloaded rifles, in which the embassies of two frowning powers stand face to face, the established religion is the Holy (or possibly Wholly) Unorthodox Church, national liberation holidays are celebrated almost daily, and the chief executive is the apparently bumbling gentleman played by Mr. Ustinov.

This nameless general, who presides over the fortunate land and gives aid and comfort to lovers, is even more important to the play than either the small nation or the young sweethearts. Although he seems to be vague and a trifle confused, he has a keen and satirical mind, and nothing could be much funnier or more edifying than to see him darting back and forth between the rival ambassadors, telling them that the other side is aware that the enemy knows that its secret code has been broken. It seems to reduce a lot of diplomacy to absurdity.

Urbane Intelligence

The truth is that there isn't much plot to "Romanoff and Juliet." But there doesn't need to be. Thanks both to Mr. Ustinov's writing and playing, there is a flow of wit, unmalicious satire and seemingly improvised humor that is as charming as it is entertaining. And there is always present an air of urbane intelligence that is highly winning. The one serious scene is the Russian diplomat's account of the day before his disillusionment had set in, when the Revolution held high hopes for him, and it is movingly and eloquently written.

In his first appearance on the American stage, Mr. Ustinov dominates the evening, not only because he has given himself a delightful part, but also because he plays it with such brilliance. In the supporting cast, I especially liked Edward Atienza as the ancient patriarch of the State Church, William Greene as a young American who falls in love with an intensely serious Soviet girl, and Fred Clark as the American ambassador. I enjoyed "Romanoff and Juliet" when I saw it in London a year ago, and I still find it witty and charming.

"ROMANOFF AND JULIET"

Comedy in three acts by Peter Ustinov; staged by George S. Kaufman; setting by Denis Malcles; settings and lighting supervised by Howard Bay; costumes by Helene Pons; incidental music by Harold Rome; ballads by Mr. Ustinov and Anthony Hopkins; presented by David Merrick at the Plymouth Theatre, October 10, 1957. The cast:

First Soldier..... Phil Leeds
Second Soldier..... Jack Gilford
The General..... Peter Ustinov
Hooper Moulsworth... Fred Clark
Vadim Romanoff... Henry Lascoe
Igir Romanoff.. Gerald Sarracini
Juliet..... Elizabeth Allen
The Spy..... Carl Don
Beulah Moulsworth.....
Natalie Schafer
Evdokia Romanoff.....
Marianne Deeming
Jr. Capt. Marfa Ziotochienko..
Sylvia Daneel
Freddie Vandestuyt.....
William Greene
The Archbishop... Edward Atienza

DAILY NEWS

October 11, 1957

Ustinov's 'Romanoff and Juliet' A Deft, Funny, Delightful Fable

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Score two in a row for the London theatre. First there was John Osborne's "Look Back in Anger" and now there is, as of last evening at the Plymouth Theatre, Peter Ustinov's "Romanoff and Juliet."

The two plays are antithetical, Osborne's being tough-minded and realistic, Ustinov's being warm and fanciful. They do agree though, on one thing—that the world could be more pleasant than it is.

"Romanoff and Juliet" has the slimmest and most fantastical of plots, being an operetta-type romance set in a mythical republic. But it possesses the double advantage of having Ustinov both as a writer and as an actor. As a writer he pokes sly fun at international differences and makes them seem smaller and funnier than they are in the newspapers. As an actor he is a completely engaging comedian with an extraordinary sense of timing and a great gift for pantomime.

A Tug-of-War

Ustinov, with a beard, rimmed nose-glasses and a padded waistline, is the president of the smallest of all mythical countries. It is so small that it has a standing army of two—and the army doesn't even stand, but slouches. This country lies smack between the East and the West, so each of these world divisions seeks to make Ustinov an ally.

Russia sends an ambassador—a Romanoff, no less. The U. S. dispatches one of its typical business diplomats. One of several high points of this delightful comedy is the scene in which Ustinov shuttles between the rival embassies, listening to their blandishments and threats. This is a hilarious cartoon of diplomacy.

Why the title, "Romanoff and Juliet?" The Russian has a son and the American has a daughter named Juliet and these twain fall in love. And love has its sway. National rivalries vanish as the parents are reconciled after a wedding which is remarkable for its lunacy.

Capital Company

It is a capital company which George S. Kaufman has directed. Henry Lascoe is the Russian envoy and Fred Clark the American. As their respective offspring, Gerald Sarracini and Elizabeth Allen, carry on with their romance as though they believed it. Natalie Schafer and Marianne Deeming make an unworldly pair of ambassadors' wives, and Carl Don is quite a George Raft type as a spy until he is felled by religion.

There is an excellent caricature of an ancient archbishop by Edward Atienza, and Phil Leeds and Jack Gilford are hilarious as the slouching army which works as a pair of pitchmen on its hours off. To them are entrusted two incidental songs by Harold Rome, the more amusing of which, because it is so deliberately awful, is called "Set the Bluebird Free."

Howard Bay's two-level, quick-moving set, which centers upon an erratic town clock, is all of a piece with the fun. And all of "Romanoff and Juliet" is fun.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

October 11, 1957

THEATER

'Romanoff and Juliet'

By WALTER KERR

THE lurching, groaning, fantastically wheezing mechanical figures in the clock tower of St. Ullrich have barely appeared to strike their first wrong hour when author-actor Peter Ustinov, playing the temporary president of the smallest country in Europe, steps away from his tasseled guardsmen to address the customers who have come to "Romanoff and Juliet."

"Are those people out there in the shadows?" one of the untidy soldiers has asked. Yes, they are. And Mr. Ustinov is now inclined to have a few words with them to make it perfectly plain that these are puppets up here on the stage. They are antically formed toy-figures, borrowed more or less from the rag-bag of Harlequin to impersonate an American ambassador, a Russian ambassador, and their children who fall in love. Whatever is going to happen while the turntables spin carrying some Pied Piper scenery is in the nature of a lark, a divertissment, a light-footed procession of papier-mache poltroons and sugar candy sweethearts. In short, "Romanoff and Juliet" is going to be a cheerful improvisation.

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Improvisation it is, as the fires of romance melt down the stumbling-blocks to international understanding. Two fumbling footsoldiers turn, in the bat of an eye and a twist of Mr. Ustinov's pen, into Venetian-type peddlers marketing questionable postcards. A lowering spy with a menacing black muffler turns, rather later, into a tonsured monk in the Holy Unorthodox Church. Juliet (Elizabeth Allen) delivers a long monologue to her cherished one's portrait, which is missing from the picture-frame in her hands. Wax saints from one or another uncharted century dissolve miraculously—and quite cleverly—into determined youngsters, while a palsied Archbishop heels to windward under the weight of his staff.

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Mr. Ustinov himself is everywhere at once, slipping sibilantly into one embassy to filch a note, reporting to the other that its code has been broken, darting directly back to discover that each beleaguered nation knows that the other knows about the broken code. The ringmaster of the festivities is glossy, amiable, smoothly irreverent, and rather given to repeating his better effects (the dying sentence, the stammering silence, the hunched shoulders to indicate that the world's insanity is all too much for him.)

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If he has one mild defect as a performer, he has another, somewhat more serious one as a casual playwright. He seems **really** to be improvising. That is to say, the easygoing vaudeville he has put together seems never to have been written down, pared, pointed. It's as though the urbane gentleman had reeled his thoughts into a tape recorder, rattling on as fast as ever he could, in the confident hope that he would sooner or later, and more or less frequently, hit something.

• • •

He does hit things, good ones. "Sometimes I wish I could fall in love," an unhappy politician roars, "then at least you know who your opponent is!" Russian ambassador Henry Lascoe comes up with a pleasantly stirring memory of St. Petersburg, American ambassador Fred Clarke goes wonderfully limp between frenzied outbursts, leading-man Gerald Sarracini puts a pistol to his head with amusing ardor, and the pictorial circus—under George S. Kaufman's directorial management—gaily supports the verbal one.

But we have to listen while our author is reaching out for his occasoinal gem, trying this one, testing that one, turning back to what has already worked (we hear not only of St. Thomas the Impossible but also of Theodore the Wrong, Inez the Precocious, and so on). One whole scene is given to a round-robin of breast-beating confessions (the returns diminish steadily here), a tyrannical father shouts "Be gentle, but don't forget—be tough!" and there's quite a bit of social comment along the general lines of "This is a free country, madame—we have a right to share your privacy in a public place."

The pictures are pretty, and the insouciance is often winning. What "Romanoff and Juliet" lacks is the sustained, finely - tempered, completely commanding wit that alone will keep such a souffle aloft.

The New York Times

October 11, 1957

Theatre: Ustinov's Night

'Romanoff and Juliet' Opens at Plymouth

By BROOKS ATKINSON

PETER USTINOV has a real problem. Unless all his comedians are as gifted as he is, his plays are marred with barren stretches.

In "Romanoff and Juliet," which opened at the Plymouth last evening, he has exercised the author's prerogative of crowding his own performance into the last half of the evening. Since he is an immensely talented droll, the last act of his comic caprice is immensely amusing.

He is playing the part of the head of state in the smallest country in Europe. Give him a whiff of protocol and he is in fine satirical fettle. He is a comic figure to begin with. Bearded, dressed rather carelessly in formal diplomatic attire, with gloves, walking-stick and pince-nez on a ribbon, he looks like a rather obese professor of higher mathematics who is embarrassed by his own personality.

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But he is also a vastly entertaining satirical buffoon—always grave and therefore always funny. His little grimaces of diplomatic punctilio, his awkward formality, when he is holding conversations with ambassadors, his deprecatory shrugs, his chopped-off military salute, his general attitude of skirting disaster by wiles and luck, his tired hopelessness—compose a fabulous figure of fun. In the last part of the second act and throughout the last act, he takes charge of "Romanoff and Juliet," and this is, by no particular chance, the part of a show that remains in a theatregoer's mind.

But "Romanoff and Juliet" ought to be much funnier than it is. In his capacity as author, Mr. Ustinov chronicles the political consequences of a romance between Juliet, daughter of the American Ambassador, and Romanoff, son of the Soviet Ambassador. It is a good situation for satire on international politics, to say nothing of satire on American bombast and Soviet dogmatism.

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It gives Mr. Ustinov, as the star actor, a chance to carry tales from one embassy to the other and compound political intrigue. The American Ambassador knows that the Russians know the American code. The Russian Ambassador knows that the Americans know that the Russians know the American code, etc. Out of small absurdities, Mr. Ustinov builds big guffaws.

Unless he speaks them and acts them with his comically fumbling gestures, however, they are not so funny as they ought to be. The cast is composed for the most part of honest actors bellowing at the top of their voices under George S. Kaufman's uninflected farce direction. They are about as funny as a box on the ears.

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In terms of stagecraft this has the effect of providing the contrast that makes Mr. Ustinov seem like a master comedian. But he would be a master in any circumstances. And the whole conception of "Romanoff and Juliet" seems to call for subtle make-believe. Denis Malcles' charming setting looks as festive as "The Merchant of Venice" masquerade scenes. The hocus-pocus of the ancient clock is childishly delightful. In the last scene Edward Atienza's quavering, stumbling, sibilant, doddering, archbishop comes straight out of "Alice in Wonderland."

And Mr. Ustinov's very dignified mockery has sweetness as well as sardonicism. To this playgoer, "Romanoff and Juliet" is a little disappointing. It suggests more than it accomplishes. For nobody else in the cast can blend with the wayward subtlety of Mr. Ustinov's comic acting. Unless he acts all the parts, his improvised comedies will always be marred by barren stretches.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

October 11, 1957

Love Pierces Ironic Curtain

By FRANK ASTON.

Here we are again with one of those importations that "had a highly successful run in London." The title is "Romanoff and Juliet," the author and star is Peter Ustinov, and the gist is a mental exercise more difficult than "let's all clap hannies" but not so abstruse as the beeps of Little Red Sputnik the First.

Mr. Ustinov, who is not unknown over here as a genteel mocker, keeps trying in the current piece. Cast as the president of a tiny never-never nation, which has an army of two men, he declares that a diplomat is only a head waiter who is allowed to sit down. His Communist Romanoff, reproaching himself for loving a capitalist, says the girl's constant concern with clothes proves her to be completely unfeminine. His Juliet, soliloquizing on her sudden passion for the Russian, reminds herself she should love a man only after mature deliberation in a night club. Those may not be among Mr. Ustinov's best lines, but they should give you an idea.

Jovial Daydream.

The plot, if that's what it's called, is a kind of jovial daydream in which a Russian ambassador's son and a United States ambassador's daughter fall in love. Before boy gets girl Mr. Ustinov pokes fun at U.S. ambassadors who grow up on Princeton crews and boards of directors and at Russians who mouth their jargon while wishing they could be done with all Soviet folderol.

Mr. Ustinov apparently likes people and believes they'd be pretty decent if it weren't for the world they have to live in. His audience at the Plymouth last evening met his standards of amiability by laughing practically all the time. They seemed fond of him, of Fred Clark and Henry Lascoe as ambassadors, of Natalie Schafer as an American wife, and of pretty Elizabeth Allen, who was cast as Juliet virtually at curtain time and brought off her assignment successfully.

Relief Assured.

The spectators found that Denis Malcles' sets on twin turntables lent speed to the production, and it was comforting to know that when speeches grew windy relief would come soon because George S. Kaufman had done the staging.

Really, it should have been a triumph. But this reporter kept waiting for the orchestra to blare and the girls to come dancing on.

Daily Mirror

October 11, 1957

ROBERT COLEMAN'S THEATRE

'Romanoff' Proves Dullish Burlesque

Peter Ustinov, London's current wonder boy, gets around. He's taken the "Romeo and Juliet" theme, flavored it with dashes of "Ninotchka," "Call Me Madam," and "Graustark," shaken it up in a concrete mixer, and poured forth a curious cocktail. A concoction hardly calculated to please the sophisticated palate.

Called "Romanoff and Juliet," it has to do with a romance between the son and daughter of the Russian and American Ambassadors to "the smallest country in Europe." Under the spell of this dream-world republic, the kids and their respective pops and moms forget the rigors of Communism and the efficiencies of capitalism in the glow of young love.

USTINOV IS A versatile man, at once actor and playwright. In this instance he is infinitely more winning as the former. Cast as the president of his small nation, bent on steering a safe and profitable course between East and West, he etches the part with evident relish.

Ustinov dominated "Romanoff and Juliet" for more than a year in the British capital. Paying less for tickets over there, the customers aren't as choosy as Manhattan's pew-holders. They go for these artificial spoofs about affairs of the heart in comic-opera backgrounds with gusto.

At 35, Ustinov has become a legend in Britain, where one aisle-sitter dubbed him "a veteran boy prodigy." And he established an enviable reputation there and over here with a delightful piece of imaginative theatre, "The Love of Four Colonels." That entry had wit, satiric bite and prancing fantasy in its favor.

It is obvious that he sought to duplicate that feat with "Romanoff and Juliet." Unfortunately, he has come up with a dullish burlesque show in a Tiffany setting. Sans girls. There are occasional snatches of music, supplied by Harold Rome, but they don't help much.

THE HUMOR STRUCK us like leaden pellets from a sawed-off shotgun. Even so astute a stager as George S. Kaufman hasn't been able to do much toward focusing Ustinov's aim on the target.

Ustinov himself is robustious and vital. It is apparent that he is accustomed to a good table. He gives of his energy without stint, as generously as our own diminutive pixie, Bobby Clark.

Henry Lascoe, Natalie Schafer, Edward Atienza, Fred Clark, Gerald Sarracini, Elizabeth Allen, William Greene, Sylvia Daneel, Marianne Deeming, Phil Leeds, Jack Clifford and Carl Don also labor valiantly in a fruitless battle.

David Merrick, the theatre's shrewdest salesman, brought the new arrival to the Plymouth to an advance reported to be in the neighborhood of half a million dollars, plus the blessing of the august Theatre Guild's subscription-list.

THE INITIAL AUDIENCE was the friendliest of this semester. A majority of the first-nighters fairly howled with glee. In fact, we suspect that a lady sitting near us will have to call in a medico this morning to tape up ribs strained by laughter. Frankly, we wondered if we were both seeing the same play.

Journal-American

October 11, 1957

Disappointing Comedy

By JOHN McCLAIN

HERE IS one of those unrewarding instances in which a London success failed to weather the trip across the pond. I saw Peter Ustinov in Ustinov's "Romanoff and Juliet" a couple of Summers ago in England and I had a very good time. I saw it last night at the Plymouth Theatre and I didn't.

There are a number of rather obvious reasons for this, and some more oblique. Among the more evident are such things as jokes about Americans which are always funny there and labored here, and an uncertainty in the Nw York cast. Then there is the consideration of Mr. Ustinov, himself—a giant in his own back yard but a tenuous figure in his Broadway debut.

For he frequently turns the proceedings into a variety show in which he is the central figure; much of the second act could stand alone as a vaudeville skit, climaxed when he personally moves the scenery into position for the next scene. He is a bright and beguiling comedian, but as an author he becomes infatuated with his own conception.

His story, obviously, is based on the "Romeo and Juliet" theme. Ustinov is the head of the smallest country in Europe, and the love story involves the son of the Russian Ambassador and the daughter of the U. S. envoy.

The classic plot is not very carefully followed, but there is ample opportunity to make jokes about the conflicting ideologies and to resolve the evening in a love feast.

"Close your eyes and come to us," Ustinov says, in effect, "and these problems of a troubled world will disappear." Close your eyes, and you are apt to be hit right in the head with a falling Sputnik, he doesn't say.

Great Gifts

In the matter of casting, about which there has apparently been trouble, I missed the services of the British actor who played the part of the Russian Ambassador (since deceased, I am told), and I was not exactly transported by either of the young lovers.

Still and all, I was once again aroused by the great gifts of young Mr. Atienza, from the original company, who is wonderfully comic as a decrepit cleric, by Fred Clark, who brought new vitality to the role of the U. S. Ambassador, and by Phil Leeds and Jack Gilford as the squalid soldiers in Gen. Ustinov's army.

There is not the slightest doubt about Mr. Ustinov's capabilities either as author or actor. In England he is cherished as a sort of latter-day Noel Coward, and it is quite possible he will reach a similar stature here.

But it takes time. And I don't believe his present production of "Romanoff and Juliet," in America, will be remembered as one of his foremost efforts.

"The Egghead"

DAILY NEWS

October 10, 1957

'The Egghead' Badly Scrambled And Undercooked Stage Omelet

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Molly Kazan's drama, "The Egghead," which was presented by Hope Abelson last evening at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, is a soap-box opera which goes into a fit of discussion about all our inalienable rights and inevitable problems. The one really sound point it made was the inalienable right of a dramatist to bore me.

"The Egghead," set in a New England college town, stirs into a theatrical omelet a great number of ingredients. Among these are the right to think, the right to speak out, the right to teach, the right to believe, the right to have a baby by a second wife, the right to be Leftist, the right to be Right, the right to be an FBI snoop and the right to be an ex-Communist.

Commy Unmasked

Karl Malden is the college prof, playing a forthright and irritable man who believes in the sanctity of the classroom. He has invited as a speaker Lloyd Richards, a former student and a Negro. Gossip in the town holds that this fellow is a Commy, but old Prof. Malden refuses to believe this and insists that the lecture go on.

Old Prof. Malden's cantankercus individuality is a sore trial to his new young wife, played by Phyllis Love, who would much rather bring the baby onstage for everybody to look at than listen. I would rather have looked at the baby, too, if the thing hadn't been such a fraud. Stage babies, over which all actors coo and gurgle, always look like my dirty shirts wrapped up in a clean blanket.

After two acts of dreary hocuspocus, Mrs. Kazan pulls her switcheroo. This prized Negro pupil of old Prof. Malden's turns out to be a real, tough, consecrated Commy. This makes old Prof. Malden so mad that he decides he is going to have more freedom of thought than ever in his classes.

"THE EGGHEAD"

Play in three acts by Molly Kazan; staged by Hume Cronyn; settings by Richard Sylbert; costumes by Anna Hill Johnstone; presented by Hope Abelson at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, October 9, 1957. The cast:

Jackie Parson.....Kevin Drohan
Sally Parson.....Phyllis Love
Martin Donahue...Biff McGuire
Finney.....Graham Jarvis
Hank Parson.....Karl Malden
Roger Parson...Nicholas Pryor
Gottfried Roth....Eduard Franz
Harvey Robbins..Richard Robbins
Madeline Robbins..Helen Shields
Annie Grierson...Marion Sweet
Perry Hall.....Lloyd Richards
Essie.....Ruth Attaway

Except for a few tense moments in the last act, when the Negro reveals himself and his motives, "The Egghead" is lamentably untheatrical, and the cast is so big that the director, Hume Cronyn, is sore put for excuses to get actors off the stage. Perhaps they should never have been allowed on it in the first place.

The New York Times
October 10, 1957

Theatre: 'The Egghead'

Karl Malden Stars in Molly Kazan Play

By BROOKS ATKINSON

IN "The Egghead," which was produced at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre last evening, Molly Kazan has written a thesis play about a college professor deceived by a Communist.

Somewhere in a small town in northern New England, Professor Parson, a militant liberal, defends a former student against the charge of communism. Using moral slogans of considerable grandeur, he bellows at two F. B. I. agents, yells at his adolescent son, humiliates his wife, defies the president of the college, puts his classroom at the disposal of the former student for a lecture and propagandizes the neighborhood. In the third act his wife is the one who can prove that the former student is a Communist, and that her sanctimonious husband has been defending a fraud.

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Thesis dramas frequently produce effective third acts. "The Egghead" is no exception. As in a detective drama, the clues make sense, the guilty man is unmasked and things are resolved generally. Under the workmanlike direction of Hume Cronyn, Karl Malden, who plays the part of the egghead, faces defeat with candor, giving one of those excellent Malden performances in which thoughtful timing, the poised stance, the inquiring look into the faces of other actors yield a winning impression of homeliness and sincerity.

Every actor has a triumphant moment in the third act. Eduard Franz, who plays the part of a former European Communist, now enlightening the innocent Americans, exits to grateful applause. As Professor Parson's irritating son, Nicholas Pryor has a chance to be pleasant in the last act. Phyllis Love, as the wife who seemed abnormally stupid in the first two acts, emerges as the winner, and can afford to be magnanimous.

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Even the Communist exits to a round applause, perhaps to acknowledge the fact that Lloyd Richards has been playing an unpopular part without equivocating. For it is plain that he is leaving the stage to undermine the country. "There have to be moral standards" says Professor Parson when he upbraids the former student for having canceled his communism. "Don't be a sentimental liberal," the Communist retorts contemptuously. Mr. Richards plays the villain with enough skill, intelligence and bravado to win the admiration of the audience at the end.

In thesis dramas the troublesome stretches are likely to be the acts of careful preparation. "The Egghead" is no exception in this respect either. To arrange for the triumphant conclusion it has to manipulate people as if they were ideas. They have no life of their own. Professor Parson is more objectionable than he would have to be if Mrs. Kazan did not have to unhand him in the last act; and his wife has to be monotonously childish. The forced heartiness at the faculty party, the excessive bromides in the chit-chat, the insults, the tensions have a false ring. For they are not so much expressions of life as part of the evidence.

It is easier to believe the conclusion of this play than the material that composes it. Everything has been done to make "the Egghead" attractive and persuasive—an illuminating set by Richard Sylbert, costumes in good taste by Anne Hill Johnstone, winning and occasionally comic acting in all the parts, not to ignore the heart-tugs when a sleepy child in pajamas rushes into his mother's arms.

But the strain on the credulity is greater than the size of the victory warrants. In the last act "The Egghead" is blameless propaganda. But is it art?

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
October 10, 1957

THEATER

'The Egghead'

By WALTER KERR

THE measure of the candor Molly Kazan applies to her materials in "The Egghead" may be gauged by a trivial domestic incident that turns up in the third act. Phyllis Love, playing the wife of a vigorously liberal college professor in a small New England town, is sitting in her living-room arguing politics with a European ex-Communist. She has her blanketed baby in her arms. Her sleepy five-year-old suddenly stumbles into view. He is tousle-haired, bleary-eyed, perfectly endearing. He weaves to the sofa, looks at his mother's lap, gives the baby a good belt to one side, and flops down immediately onto the space he has ruthlessly made. Mrs. Kazan is not going to be sentimental about cuddly tots.

She is, in fact, going to be sentimental about nobody. Certainly not about the father of this brood, a well-meaning, hard-working, outspoken, mightily responsible old-line "liberal." Karl Malden plays him and plays him beautifully—for every degree of pompousness, of fatuousness, of closed-mind righteousness that is in him. Mr. Malden gives us the warm-blooded fighter who, as a youngster, was eternally "out carrying banners before breakfast" and gives him to us with honor and integrity. He also hands us the monolith this man has become: a champion of won causes, a repeater of noble phrases, an echo that is now incapable of stopping to think things over. This is the liberal as fossil, cuttingly written, juicily played.

Nor are any of four or five other placards of our time going to be spared the dry light of a dead-level eye. The Communist himself, here also a Negro, is hauled out for a mince-no-words going-over. Lloyd Richards, as a brilliant former student who is now the center of a "witch-hunt," bares his teeth and plunges into a passionate condemnation of American racism that is bitter, brutal, and wholly comprehensible in its hammer-stroke power. In the turn of a phrase, or the twist of a smile, he is swiftly something else, the other side of a self-made martyr: bland, evasive, committed to a chilling "discipline." The story of this particular man is whipped out in all its particulars. Both the portrait and its performance are strikingly, even shockingly, complete.

If Mrs. Kazan has tried to tell the contemporary truth about her muddled contestants, the actors — under Hume Cronyn's unerringly skillful direction—are equally straightforward, plain spoken, without illusion. Biff McGuire as an Irish F. B. I. man, Eduard Franz as a bitterly experienced refugee, Nicholas Pryor as a rebellious son—all are perfect. And there is nothing in the evening better than Phyllis Love's now shining, now stumbling, now fiercely defiant "child wife." Watching Miss Love skim lightly over the embarrassments of a dinner party, and then move slowly and gropingly toward an intellectual stature she isn't supposed to possess, is to see a charming innocent grow into spunky maturity before your disbelieving, totally delighted, eyes.

With these things said, there is a question to be asked. Why, in spite of the fact that we are listening with considerable intensity to every syllable of the diagnosis that is being offered on the stage of the Barrymore, are we never quite free of a sense of uneasiness, of gingerly resistance to some of the occasion's intellectual twists and turns? Why are we never precisely comfortable in the playhouse?

I suspect it is because the materials are not—at this odd and incomplete moment in time—wholly subject to the distillation, the shaping into patterns, that are inevitably demanded by the stage. When Mrs. Kazan must apply the principles of theatrical shape to her discussion, false notes strike faintly: certain papers must be slipped into a briefcase and disposed of, the "plotting" must be resolved by a handy maidservant who turns out to have lived at the scene of the crime, a secret tape-recorder must be set in motion behind half-opened doors. "Aren't you being melodramatic?" asks one of the characters at this last point, warning us that the author is herself edgily aware of some clash between candor and construction, between openness and ingenuity.

"The Egghead" is a circuitous, many-sided, up-to-the-minute debate, written with bite and without inhibition; as such, and on its own political-seminar grounds, you will certainly find it interesting and possibly stimulating. But it has not that independent existence, that assertion of created life quite apart from the editorial page, that gives a human-interest story the breath and the flesh of a work of art.

New York Post

October 10, 1957

TWO on the AISLE

By RICHARD WATTS Jr.

The Case of the Innocent Liberal

It seems to be the thesis of Molly Kazan in "The Egghead" that the liberal intellectual is an innocent and gullible dolt, who bullies or patronizes those who dare to disagree with him and is a sucker for Communist wiles, but is basically sound at heart. All you have to do is beat him in the face a few times with reality. Her play about this well-meaning lump of illusions, which opened last night at the Ethel Barrymore Theater, finally gets down to dramatic fundamentals in its third act and clearly has the virtue of impassioned sincerity.

To present her defense, if you can call it that, of the naive denizen of a dream world, Mrs. Kazan shows him as an idealistic teacher in a New England college, who is outraged because he feels that a former student of his, a brilliant young Negro now working in a nearby factory, is being persecuted by the FBI. Refusing to believe that the youth is actually a Communist, he invites him to speak before his class, despite his wife's doubts, and it is only when he discovers that the ungrateful wretch really is a Red that he is brought to his senses.

The Wise Wife

One of the messages of the play is that a man, especially if he is a blustering nitwit intellectual, should listen to the little woman. In this case, she is an apparently guileless child wife, who isn't supposed to have an idea of her own and causes incredulous gales of laughter from her friends when she tells them she has been going to the library. They simply don't understand her. She's been going there to check up on the ex-student's subversive past, and it is she, with some aid from a German ex-Red, who brings about the revelation.

There is a kind of personal quality in the writing of "The Egghead" that gives it a documentary interest, and, when it gets down to its melodramatic job of bringing about the third-act confession of the Negro Communist, there is no doubt of its tense theatrical effectiveness. Up to that point, however, it is chiefly concerned with the ideas and general mentality of its title character, and here it seems to me in less sound territory. Mrs. Kazan's attitude toward her egghead seems fairly patronizing, and he emerges as rather a foolish intellectual bully.

The Speech

Nor does it appear to me that the particular example she employs for showing the error of her hero is the most persuasive she could have chosen. His liberalism, mistaken as she sees it, is supposed to be genuine, and I think he would still have felt there was no reason why that speech shouldn't have been given. And, while the teacher insists at the end of the play that his error was in not being liberal enough, the final point of "The Egghead" seems to be that intellectuals shouldn't be trusted and those who don't do so are well advised.

The acting is first-rate. Karl Malden, an unfailingly skillful player, gives another of his striking performances in the title part, and Phyllis Love is entirely believable as the wife. Lloyd Richards offers a brilliant portrayal of the Negro Red, at once sinister and moving, while Biff McGuire, as a charming FBI man, and Eduard Franz, as the reformed German Communist, are excellent. And the final act has theatrical force. But I cannot believe that "The Egghead" presents an effective dramatization of the case of the innocent liberal.

Journal-American

October 10, 1957

A Compelling Drama That Had to Be Told

By JOHN McCLAIN

THERE SHOULD be happy tidings around the Ethel Barrymore Theatre today, for I believe it is housing a hit. "The Egghead," a new play by Molly Kazan, is something long awaited—an articulate and compelling exploration of the reverse side of liberalism, the case against the double-dome who, in his zeal for freedom of expression, nurtures the infidel in his living room.

Mrs. Kazan, wife of Elia, the talented director-actor who not long ago publicly renounced all party affiliations, has taken a courageous stand. She shows us how a sincere though obstinate liberal can be seduced into near disaster through his loyalty to a protege.

At this juncture in the world's history it took a stout heart to make the party member a Negro, to state the shocking credo of those subversives who believe any means justifies their end.

Her hero is a professor in a small New England college—personable, dominant, and constantly spoiling for a fight. When he hears that there is the threat of a "witch hunt" for a former pupil he takes up arms in the defense; the arrival of two FBI agents on routine examination only convinces him that he has been overwhelmed by the Gestapo.

The possibility that the subject of the inquiry might be guilty is lost in the loftier language of human rights and the protection of the Constitution.

When, through the untrammeled thinking of his young wife, his son and a fellow professor, the card-carrier is exposed, the professor prepares to face the future with the knowledge that he was an "egghead"—and a soft one at that.

As a play I thought it was always thoughtful, often humorous and frequently quite touching. Mrs. Kazan has created a very realistic atmosphere in this college household and the people move about and speak with reality.

Her first act suffers slightly from the usual process of planting, her second act is much more engrossing, and the third excellent, I believe, until it begins to compromise too many values. She has endeavored to clean up, in effect, and I would have been happier with a more positive resolution.

As the major figure Karl Malden is a wonderfully truculent and oddly-believable school teacher, roaring and overpowering the proceedings throughout. Phyllis Love, playing the role of his childlike second wife, cuts through this flow of logic and rhetoric with the weapons of simplicity and female guile.

She is aided by outstanding performances from Edward Franz, as a former Communist; by Lloyd Richards, the Negro party member; by Biff McGuire, Marion Sweet, Graham Jarvis and Kevin Drohan.

Hume Cronyn seemed to have done a notable job of direction. The players, always audible, moved unostentatiously about their chores. But they kept moving.

"The Egghead" is a play that had to be written, and I think Mrs. Kazan has written it well. There have been great instances of injustice on the side of the reactionaries; but there are also the "eggheads" who believe blindly that to be suspect is to be blameless.

Daily Mirror

October 10, 1957

ROBERT COLEMAN'S THEATRE

'Egghead' Fails to Completely Satisfy

In "The Egghead," Molly (Mrs. Elia) Kazan, has penned a stinging indictment of Communists. Her charges are not exactly new, for we all know that the party card-holders are a bad lot, ruthless, devious and treacherous. They'll sell their best friends down the river for power.

The Egghead is a liberal professor at a New England college, who sticks his head into the sand like an ostrich when faced by ugly facts. He has invited a former student, now working in a nearby tool factory, to address his class because he thinks the smart lad an honest idealist.

WHEN THE FBI and his wife have doubts about the visiting speaker, the professor brushes their arguments aside. The bright boy's word that he is not a Communist is good enough for him. After the speech, however, he discovers that he's been betrayed. His protege has lied. So he turns in his resignation, feeling himself no longer competent to teach others.

But in the end he changes his mind. He will tell his students that it is the eggheads, like himself, who make a mistake by being soft-boiled when they ought to be hard-boiled. He will continue to wage the good fight against the lunatic fringe on both sides, those who would prey on humanity for their own selfish purposes.

The trouble with "The Egghead" is that Mrs. Kazan has too much to say in too short a time. Her heart is on the side of the angels, but her restless mind sprawls all over the Ethel Barrymore stage. Her people tend to become types rather than characters, participating in heated debate.

Only in the last of three acts does her play jell into tense drama when the well-meaning mentor realizes that he's been tricked by a cunning adversary whom he thought a friend. This scene is played with genuine emotion and fire by Karl Malden, as the angry Egghead, and cold and callous defiance by Lloyd Richards, as the unmasked Commie.

Edward Franz has a moving sequence or two as an instructor whose parents were killed by the Nazis, and his wife by the Communists in Germany. He had sought hope in Marxism, only to be disillusioned. Phyllis Love, Biff McGuire, Helen Shields, Nicholas Pryer, Ruth Attaway, Richard Robbins, Marion Sweet, Graham Jarvis and Kevin Drohan do their best to make people out of ideas, under Hume Cronyn's direction.

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"THE EGGHEAD" IS the most controversial entry to arrive in town so far this season. Mrs. Kazan strikes some telling blows against totalitarians of all stripes.

She's in there pitching for freedom of speech, while showing up the phonies who misuse it. She's urging the earnest and sincere to stick to their ideals, but beware of lending their names to dubious organizations and causes.

It took courage for Molly Kazan to write this bitter and honest play, and for Hope Abelson to produce it. We can only regret that Mrs. Kazan's indignation doesn't add up to an evening of completely satisfying and truly stirring theatre.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

October 10, 1957

A Liberal May Be a Menace

By FRANK ASTON.

Molly Kazan's "The Egghead" says theatrically what needs to be said. Her point is that the poached liberal is a menace to America in the way he coddles Commies and fails to realize that he looks prehistoric to the young and is a museum piece to infiltrating Reds.

At the same time, with penetrating sympathy for the unfortunate, Mrs. Kazan bares a Negro character's anguish. "You should spend one day in my skin," he says to the disillusioned egghead, trying to explain why he is a party member practicing all the ugly tricks his leaders demand of him. "I know they're using me," he adds, but he has no intention of doing anything about it. He is hopelessly, ruinously trapped by color, psychology, a touch of genius, frustration and an ill-drawn dream of "when we take over."

One-Track Bigotry.

Also trapped, but only for the duration of the play which opened at the Ethel Barrymore last evening, is a New England professor who brays about his tolerance and scoffs at what he deems the one-track bigotry of less-demonstrative associates. He's so busy shouting the glories of his broadmindedness that he doesn't dream how rude, tiresome, outdated and dangerous he has become.

He gets wise expensively. When the Federal Bureau of Investigation shows interest in one of his former students (the Negro), the professor has the latter speak at the school. The fellow betrays his old teacher by lying about his subversion and is exposed by the professor's spunky wife. In a soul-searching scene, the Commie confesses, bringing himself forward, passionately and vehemently, as a representative of America's enemy in a war which he says is going on right now under the very noses of an unsuspecting people.

Fat Accolade.

Mrs. Kazan merits a fat accolade for balancing in her drama fiercely conflicting forces which befuddle and befoul America today and for demonstrating how some citizens, who should be looked up to, are in reality a bunch of suckers.

Karl Malden is loud, funny, irritating and a creature to be pitied as the egghead who decides to turn hard-boiled after too many years of being soft-boiled. His support under Hume Cronyn's foxy direction is admirable: Lloyd Richards as the contemptible but tormented Communist; Phyllis Love as the wife with hard sense under a childlike exterior; Biff McGuire and Graham Jarvis as unwelcome FBI agents; Eduard Franz as a European survivor of both Commies and Nazis; and Nicholas Pryor representing that inexplicable, promising element, the youth of today. The single set, by Richard Sylbert, is amusingly suggestive of an egghead's haphazard home.

"Mary Stuart"

The New York Times

October 9, 1957

Theatre: 'Mary Stuart'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

WITH "Mary Stuart," which opened last evening, the Phoenix Theatre has at last got off-center. Script, direction and acting restore to the Phoenix the high excitement and high purpose that almost vanished last season.

The script is a new adaptation of Schiller's historical drama about the two queens who maneuvered for the English throne in the sixteenth century. In the new version written by Jean Stock Goldstone and John Reich, "Mary Stuart" represents at its best the power and bravura of heroic drama—big scenes, bold ventures, dreadful climaxes, melodrama and tragedy.

The director is Tyrone Guthrie, surely the most potent of the friends of the Phoenix. With the largeness of scale for which he is famous and faith in the legitimacy of good theatre, Mr. Guthrie has directed a tumultuous performance. In less confident hands it could be fustian.

But Mr. Guthrie has chosen an extraordinary cast. For Mary Stuart—Irene Worth; for Elizabeth—Eva Le Gallienne. In the secondary parts—such stimulating actors as Douglas Campbell, William Hutt, Max Adrian, Robert Goodier, Ellis Rabb, John Colicos, Michael Hogan, James Neylin, Dorothy Sands. Most of them have previously appeared under Mr. Guthrie's daring direction in dramas of pith and moment. Now they are with him again, caught in another swirl of big emotions and again the results are stirring.

Everyone knows the legend of the Queen of Scots who intrigued for the throne of Elizabeth of England. The adapters and Schiller before them improved on history, notably in a scene that brings the two rivals face to face. It is a tale of giants calculated to make a theatregoer sit on the edge of his seat. For the drama is full of confrontations, intrigues, betrayals and recklessness in general.

Give Mr. Guthrie credit for having both the courage and the skill to make full use of such gaudy material, always keeping safely on the side of logic and belief. But don't credit him at the expense of the chief actors. For Miss Le Gallienne and Miss Worth in perfect contrast of style and personality give headlong performances that are vivid in the theatre and are bound to be memorable afterwards.

This is the finest performance Miss Le Gallienne has brought to us for a long time. Her Elizabeth is an ascetic-looking woman with a wealth of passion when she is aroused by treachery or a threat to her security. Her guile with her advisers is amusing, her cautiousness and uncertainties are disarming, and her assertions of authority are brutal when she is desperate. Thin, pale, fastidious, with a small voice that can express great emotion, Miss Le Gallienne gives a big performance in a small compass.

Miss Worth is just the opposite as Mary. She has a resonant voice with enormous volume. She is a creature of the world. Her temper is with difficulty under control. Her mind is made up and she does not scruple. A woman of courage and poise, she goes to her doom with the measured magnificence of a queen. "Mary Stuart" is a drama that gathers into its grisly web a great many people. But it is chiefly the collision of two women who are unalike except for the fortitude of their spirits. Actors, director and authors have given it great impact in the theatre.

Everyone has conspired with everybody else on the stage to make this an occasion at the Phoenix. Donald Oenslager, the designer, has prefaced it with imposing royal curtains bearing the rival coats of arms, and Alvin Colt has caparisoned it in courtly splendor.

For great occasions do inform all men, including the audience. And particularly the friends of the Phoenix, who must be grateful to the writers, director and actors who have made the first production of the season triumphantly theatrical.

"MARY STUART"

Play in two acts by Friedrich Schiller, a new adaptation by Jean Stock Goldstone and John Reich; staged by Tyrone Guthrie; settings and lighting by Donald Oenslager; costumes by Alvin Colt; incidental music by Michael Colicchio; presented by T. Edward Hambleton and Norris Houghton at the Phoenix Theatre, October 8, 1957. The cast:

Mary Stuart..... Irene Worth
Hannah Kennedy... Dorothy Sands
Sir Amyas Paulet.. Robert Goodier
Sir Edward Mortimer..... John Colicos
Lord Burleigh..... Max Adrian
Queen Elizabeth.. Eva Le Gallienne
Count L'Aubespine.. James Neylin
Earl of Leicester..... Douglas Campbell
Earl of Shrewsbury.. William Hutt
Sir William Davison... Ellis Rabb
Sir Andrew Melvil.. Michael Hogan
O'Kelly..... David Ford
Capt. of the Guard... Dario Barri
Guards..... Dalton Dearborn and Vincent Dowling

New York Post

October 9, 1957

TWO on the AISLE

By RICHARD WATTS Jr.

Tragedy of the Scottish Queen

The romantic historical drama can still be strikingly effective in the theater when the story it snatches from history is a good one and the acting has vitality and style. Since it is admirably equipped in both respects, the new adaptation by Jean Stock Goldstone and John Reich of Friedrich Schiller's tragedy, "Mary Stuart," which opened the Phoenix Theater's season last night, turns out to be remarkably absorbing. I should possibly add that it helps considerably if you happen to be as interested as I am in the unfortunate Queen of Scots.

Not that the play is any ardently partisan defense of Mary Stuart. It is far more sympathetic than some of us would be to the first Queen Elizabeth, and Mary's triumphant antagonist is as important a figure in the narrative as its titular heroine. Furthermore, there is no attempt to deny the luckless frailties of the Scottish Queen, and Schiller even went to the extent of granting her complicity in the murder of her weakling husband, Darnley, an admission most of her addicts would dispute. Yet her human warmth does make her the drama's appealing figure.

I suppose no dramatist will ever forgive history for its serious flaw of never having permitted Mary and Elizabeth to meet. Inevitably, a play dealing with the famous royal rivalry must improve on the facts by writing in an encounter between them, and this is one of the important scenes of "Mary Stuart." On the whole, though, the narrative keeps fairly close to what is known of the last days of the Scottish Queen, with the plots of her friends and foes swirling about her, and Elizabeth deviously going about the business of destroying her foe.

Even though the Goldstone-Reich adaptation has added a certain modern liveliness to Schiller's German text, "Mary Stuart" is frankly and unashamedly oratorical and old-fashioned. But the fine, resounding speeches, while less than Shakespearean in their lyric eloquence, have dramatic drive and power, and the intrigues of Burleigh and Leicester, Shrewsbury's mellow wisdom, the doomed courage of Mary, the desperate effort of young Mortimer to save her, and the wily indecisions of Elizabeth make interesting theatrical fare.

Above all, the revivified old play has roles for its two rival queens that good actresses can show their wares in, and here the Phoenix production is particularly fortunate. In the title part, Irene Worth, looking strikingly like the pictures of Mary, has the fire, beauty and romantic appeal that we admirers of the Queen of Scots would hope for in the characterization of our heroine. And Eva Le Gallienne gives what seems to me the finest performance of her career as Elizabeth. Her study of that strangely complex ruling genius is brilliant.

The men in the cast seemed to me excellent, too. Max Adrian, as the subtle and serpentine Burleigh, and William Hutt, as the wise and understanding Shrewsbury, are especially effective, and there are good portrayals by Douglas Campbell as the untrustworthy Leicester, John Colicos as the love-smitten Mortimer, and Robert Goodier as Mary's jailer. Dorothy Sands and Ellis Rabb are helpful in smaller roles. Tyrone Guthrie has directed ably, and Donald Oenslager's sets give valuable aid. I found "Mary Stuart" steadily interesting.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
October 9, 1957

THEATER

'Mary Stuart'

By WALTER KERR

I HAVE long had a sneaking suspicion that a good many of the graver crises of history were caused—and promptly settled—by the accidental meeting of a couple of women who just couldn't stand one another.

Sure enough, that's the way it works out in "Mary Stuart," an adaptation from Schiller made by Jean Stock Goldstone and John Reich, and directed for the Phoenix with a fine, rococo splendor by Tyrone Guthrie.

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Oh, the evening makes its passes at politcs, religion, and such relatively weighty matters—makes them with a good bit of bite now and then, too—as it is winding its sinuous way toward an encounter between Elizabeth of England and the much prettier, much younger lass who was in a fair position to steal her throne and—what is worse—her lover.

Then the two stumble into a confrontation in a spacious forest, while Elizabeth is presumably out hunting and dressed in her choicest Alvin Colt fur-trimmed riding outfit. At last the chips are down. Polities disappear into the underbrush. Religion is left to the hounds. One female sizes up the other, two backs arch high in air, a decent amount of preliminary spitting goes on, and then the fur flies. The destinies of kingdoms are determined in a nice, personal clawing match, no fingernails barred.

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Strange to say, and perhaps because this curious insight tends to reduce all history to a slugging-match in the powder-room, this "big" scene in the current Phoenix production is just about its least effective scene. Irene Worth, forcing her lips into furious contortions in an effort to say less than she means, and Eva Le Galliene, a red-wigged skull with a thin bloody line where her mouth should be, are both on their mettle. They leap, dive, stride and swash with admirable fervor. But this is, for one critical moment, just a feline tussle between typical girls, and it doesn't quite rate as tragedy.

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Both actreses are far more interesting when they are going it alone, contending with nothing more than wily males. Miss Worth, for instance, has a wonderful talent for irony. She can summon up the full power of her musically sneering voice and demand she be judged by a "jury of her peers" (since she has no peers, this takes care of the matter) and make you respect her for her shining effrontery. She can turn, when she is off to be executed, to a gallant who has earlier offered her "his arm" and run a knife right through him with the most dulcet tones. When she is asking our pity, or reveling in an unexpected moment of freedom, she is every bit as engaging.

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And when Miss Le Galliene is squeezing out an infinitesimal compliment for a man she may decide to marry, bending herself double on the throne like a disenchanted football coach, or halting herself in the middle of an elaborate lie to thunder out, "It's true," she is giving us her most vigorous, caustic, and shrewdly detailed performance in some years.

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Mr. Guthrie has further drawn excellent performances from Douglas Campbell, who revels in the cat-and-mouse fencings of an elusive Leicester; from Max Adrian as a subtle and silky Lord High Treasurer, and from Robert Goodier, William Hutt, Ellis Rabb, and John Colicos.

He has staged the piece in a deliberately formal, heightened, hands-spread-at-the-prosceniu m style that gulps down the Schiller heroics handily. Getting down the language itself is a bit more difficult: "metrical prose" turns out to embrace lines like "My sins were human, can as much be said of yours?" and "Let armoured reason thrust aside the cause of love and pity." The sound is big, but it's something less than lyrical.

On the whole, I'd suggest you see "Mary Stuart." Miss Worth is a fascinating actress who visits us too rarely, Schiller himself is hard to come by, and Miss Le Galliene's hallowe'en smile and tadpole eyebrows are bound to fascinate you.

DAILY NEWS
October 9, 1957

'Mary Stuart' Is Exciting Theatre; Irene Worth Triumphs as Mary

By DOUGLAS WATT

The Phoenix Theatre is in business. Beginning its fifth season last evening, the downtown playhouse came up with a flaring, impassioned performance of Friedrich Schiller's testament to bravery, "Maria Stuart"—now "Mary Stuart," in a new and forthright English adaptation.

It is not Shakespeare, this late 18th Century historical tragedy; it lacks his poetry, but it has greater clarity than most of his works. Assuming that Mary of Scotland was within her rights in contesting Elizabeth's rule over England, and pretending that the two met in verbal combat (an unfortunate innacuracy that playwrights have been trying to correct ever since), this is history in its most personal and touching form.

A Remarkable Performance

In the title role, Irene Worth gives an incandescent performance, one to treasure. Beginning slowly, as she is observed in the last days before her execution, this radiant actress, with a voice as full and varied as the lower registers of a symphony orchestra, rises to a tremendous scene between herself and the Virgin Queen and, in the next-to-closing episode, goes gravely and magnificently to her death. Were I present at the time, I think I might have sided with Elizabeth, but who could deny Miss Worth's uncommon appeal?

She is abetted by several fine actors and actresses—Eva Le Gallienne as a fussy and tormented Elizabeth, Max Adrian as a perfectly monstrous Lord Burleigh, Douglas Campbell as a wonderfully vacillating and doomed Leicester, and several more.

But it is the tragic Mary who steals the show, in life as in art; and we must bow before Tyrone Guthrie's sensitive, lovely, and unobtrusive direction of this old play. It is quite apparent that he, like many a susceptible man before him, is deeply in love with the Queen of Scots.

Good All Over

In sympathy, Donald Oenslager has designed a series of settings in black, purple and gold that enhance the story without taking away from it. And Alvin Colt has run up a number of handsome costumes that serve a like purpose.

Goethe, Schiller's close friend, staged the first performance of "Maria Stuart." We, of this generation and this place, have never before seen it. It is high time.

Journal American

October 9, 1957

Players Deserve Big Time Plaudits

By JOHN McCLAIN

THE production of Friedrich Schiller's "Mary Stuart," a classic recently adapted by Jean Stock Goldstone and John Reich, opened the current season at the Phoenix Theatre last night and succeeded, in my opinion, in establishing a new standard of excellence for this controversial downtown house. Here is a property of importance and frequent brilliance, and it is presented with the majesty it deserves. At this rate we will be obliged to cross the Phoenix off the patronizing "off-Broadway" list. This is Big Time all the way.

Schiller's consideration of the tortuous times of Queen Elizabeth and the hassle between the Anglican and Roman faiths for dominance in England is a familiar chapter in British history.

Much of the early episode in this new adaptation is concerned with the establishment of various characters, with the delineation of Mary, Queen of Scots, as the standard bearer in the effort to bring Catholicism to the throne. While necessary, this is frequently slow going.

Eva Just Great

But from the point at which Mary Stuart and Queen Elizabeth face up to one another in a scene of incisive excellence, the proceedings come alive and careen to a towering finish. The first night audience was loud and relentless in its approval.

Eva Le Gallienne returns in the role of Queen Elizabeth, and it is a performance in which she can take great pride. She looks and behaves like the unhappy Queen; she gives us a fierce insight into the life of this bewildered lady, baffled in the face of decisions. She is just great.

Playing opposite her, in the title role of Mary Stuart, is Irene Worth—another overdue absentee. She brings her wonderfully resonant voice and appealing manner to the part, playing at all times with full bravado. Restraint is not one of the qualities indicated anywhere in this play, and Tyrone Guthrie, who directed, has kept his performers in a suitably flamboyant mood.

Cast Praised

The remainder of the cast is equal to this challenge from the stars. Max Adrian is a magnificently wily and indominitable Lord Burleigh; Douglas Campbell, the deceitful Earl of Leicester, rises above some of the most demonstrative moments in the evening—chewing on the bannister without seeming silly; and they are given highly professional assistance by such established players as John Colicos, Robert Goodier, Michael Hogan, William Hutt, Ellis Rabb and Dorothy Sands.

Donald Oenslager has devised some simple, workable sets which suggest the throne room at Westminster and the premises in which Mary was contained. Alvin Colt deserves a particular nod for the costumes, particularly those of the Misses Le Gallienne and Worth.

There is no use saying "Mary Stuart" is a bright evening off-Broadway. This is a full-scale and entirely professional experience in the commercial theatre, and as such it is recommended without reservation.

Daily Mirror

October 9, 1957

'Mary Stuart' In For a Long Reign

By JUSTIN GILBERT

From the terrible moral tarnish that coated the regal furbishments of the Elizabethan court, Friedrich Schiller in his "Mary Stuart" scraped many a frightening flake.

It is this scaly moral rust that is sifted so thoroughly in the Jean Stock Goldstone — John Reich adaptation which opened at the Phoenix Theatre last night.

The production is impressive, with its graphic settings and its distinguished costumes. But it is in the direction of Tyrone Guthrie, that the viewer realizes rather grimly that "no secret was safe, no head secure."

IN FOTHERINGAY Castle languished Mary, Queen of Scots. It had been an extended hospitality—19 years. And there she had remained so long as Elizabeth, her cousin, was torn by all manner of conflicting advice, divided loyalties and disturbance of conscience.

Each of the queens, victor and vanquished, clung desperately to an elegance that produced a stalemate. Protestant Elizabeth was afraid of public opinion should she put Catholic Mary to death for plotting against her sovereignty and life.

Mary, disposed to ask mercy, possessed such an imperious nature (and an inalienable conviction of her rights under British law) that she could only shrill instead of subjugate herself.

The situation might have righted itself had it not been for a number of courtiers close to both women. And here is where Guthrie has breathed the flame of intrigue, corrosion and vanity with consummate skill.

We see the Earl of Leicester, who hoped to win the hand of the Virgin Queen, gambling away the life of Mary (for whom he secretly yearned) so that his own might be spared. His nephew, Sir Edward Mortimer, who played a double-game to aid the escape of the prisoner, was finally so overwhelmed by the craftiness he encountered that he dispatched himself.

THERE ARE A few constants in this excellent production by British, Canadian and U.S. actors, but it is in the devastating vivsection of the turpitude and moral rot that the play scores its triumph.

Miss Eve Le Gallene is splendid as Elizabeth, boasting a far inated makeup that is startling; Irene Worth is moving as the hapless Mary.

By virtue of his florid role as Edward Mortimer, John Colicos emerges one of the stronger personalities of the production, displaying a fine sense of shading and demonstration.

Not to be discounted, however, are Douglas Campbell as Leicester; Max Adrian as Burleigh; William Hutt as the Earl of Shrewsbury; Robert Goodier as Sir Amyas Paulet, Mary's warden at Fotheringay, and Dorothy Sanders as her servant. All these worthies turn in commendably respectful performances.

Let us say that "Mary Stuart" is theatre with a fine flourish—and it has an aura that is nothing short of admirable.

(Robert Coleman was unable to cover the opening because of illness.)